

## UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

**“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26)**

One early use of the term “unconditional surrender” came in 1862 at the Battle of Fort Donelson in the American Civil War. General Ulysses S. Grant refused to accept any terms from Confederate General Buckner other than “an unconditional and immediate surrender”. While this may have seemed harsh to many, this position was endorsed by President Lincoln and the initials U.S. in front of General Grant’s name came to stand for “Unconditional Surrender Grant”.

The use of the term was revived during World War II and the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan were given no alternative. If there was no “unconditional surrender” there would be no peace. This inflexible stance prompted Hitler to commit suicide paving the way for more rational German leaders to face reality. In Japan it took two A-bomb blasts to achieve the same goal. Thus the “unconditionally surrender” of former enemies has led to a lasting peace..

In 1918 General John Pershing advised President Woodrow Wilson to also demand an “unconditional surrender”. Wilson, however, rejected that advice and settled for an “armistice”. This, as you know, paved the way for Germany to regroup and start W.W. II . An even more striking example of such compromise is the sad history of hostilities in Korea. The short term compromise for peace in Korea has proved to be a long term recipe for hatred and hostility.

When the early church was attacked by both civil and religious authorities they found comfort by remembering the second Psalm (Acts 4:25 - 31). They understood that the greatest efforts of all the kings of the earth only causes God to laugh and hold them in derision. If Japan had no defense against two little A-bombs, what defense does the world have when God decides to destroy the heavens by fire and to melt the earth with fervent heat (2 Pet. 2: 11 - 13).

When Ferdinand Magellan sailed around Cape Horn he saw a new ocean and named it “Pacific,” which means “Peaceful”. When viewed more closely, however, that ocean is not peaceful at all. No ocean is ever really peaceful. Since the beginning of creation every ocean has always been a troubled mass of waves and tides that churn up sea weeds and debris. Isaiah considered this a fitting description of the wicked and wrote: **“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” (Isa 57:20-21)**

This turmoil is illustrated by wicked Herod Agrippa I. He had James beheaded and then imprisoned Peter. From a distance he may have seemed peaceful, but he was not. His father was murdered, his reckless extravagance put him so deeply in debt that he contemplated suicide, he accepted a bribe and then fled for his life, he was arrested but escaped and fled to Alexandria, he was put in prison for voicing a death threat to Tiberius, when Tiberius died he got out of prison and became king of several small kingdoms. After arranging the banishment of his uncle Herod Antipas, he became the Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. This wicked man was never at peace! Like the troubled sea his life was constantly churning up mire and mud. He was finally killed by God, as you know, because he arrogantly accepted praise that only belongs to God (Acts 12: 21 - 23).

Compare this wicked king if you will, to Simon Peter. Because Peter had made an unconditional surrender to Christ, he had the “perfect peace” promised by Isaiah (Is. 26:3). The fact that Peter was in prison awaiting his execution didn’t seem to bother him at all. While chained between two soldiers, he was so sound asleep that the angel of God had to strike him on the side to wake him up (Acts 12:7). If Herod had only unconditionally surrendered , he too could have experienced perfect peace with God. If we “unconditionally surrender” we can have it too!